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Near East & South Asia

ALGERIA

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Internal Affairs

Chadli Suspected of Seeking Asylum in Brussels

92AF1014A Algiers EL WATAN in French 6 Jul 92 p 3

[Text] The possibility that former president Chadli Bendjedid may go into exile in Belgium was raised Saturday by the newspaper LE SOIR DE BRUXELLES.

It wrote: "These are difficult times, and increasingly so, for former president Chadli Bendjedid who was forced out of government on 11 January of this year."

"The changes made Thursday evening in the Higher State Council and the formation of a political-military 'cabinet' with not a single 'Chadlist' among its members come as condemnations of the former president who is now very much alone." "Those responsible for the current maneuvers in Algeria also reveal the extent to which Chadli panicked on hearing the vengeful cries of the crowd that accused him Wednesday of being the assassin of Mohamed Boudiaf." "Isolated in his residence in Annaba, the very city where the assassination was committed, he no doubt became acutely alarmed at rumors that one of his men still in office, Interior Minister Larbi Belkheir, would soon fall from favor. For that reason, according to information confirmed by two sources, Chadli Bendjedid has begun selling off what he owns in Algeria at a fast pace (he first sold some effects in January) and is quietly making arrangements to go into exile." "Where?" the newspaper asks. "France is practically off-limits to him, especially since the matter of his apartment in Paris has caused serious problems for his faithful follower Beloucif. France is probably off-limits for political considerations as well, on the part of the French Government and the new governing team in Algiers. Belgium, on the other hand, is favored in every respect by the former president. First, he would have use of a residence in Brussels that was purchased some time ago by an unassailable proxy. But perhaps most important of all, he receives medical care at the Erasmus Hospital where he underwent a delicate operation more than two years ago, and is to return there for further examinations, regardless of his political situation."

"According to diplomatic circles," LE SOIR DE BRUXELLES continued, "the medical factor would enable Belgium to approve a request on purely humanitarian grounds. Chadli Bendjedid does not have the past of a George Habash and no one would object if this aging man of comfortable means were to take up residence not far from the university hospital.... For Algiers, that would be a soothing answer to the status of this very burdensome retiree."

In conclusion, the newspaper reported that "a ministerial source told us Friday morning that Chadli had just been in contact again with those he associates with in Brussels."

Reaction of Party Leaders to Boudiaf Killing

92AF1009C Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French 30 Jun 92 p 3

[Article by R.N.: "Party Reactions"]

[Text] Titled "Glory to the martyr of sovereign, free and democratic Algeria," the statement issued by the RCD [Rally for Culture and Democracy] reads as follows: "Algeria is in mourning. Mohamed Boudiaf was killed by a cowardly assassin."

"Boudiaf's sacrifice is the result of his moral strictness and fierce patriotism, but his disappearance was also facilitated by acts of cowardliness, compromises, and political maneuvering that encouraged the resurgence of the forces of evil opposed to the break." "Boudiaf's Algeria bothers many people, at home and abroad."

The statement concludes:

"Throughout your life, you were loyal to the nation. We shall be faithful to you and worthily continue your struggles."

"More than ever, the government and republic of citizens will faithfully honor the memory of the martyr of sovereign, free, and democratic Algeria."

In its statement, the Political Bureau of the PAGS [Socialist Vanguard Party] considers the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf an "irreparable loss for Algeria."

For this party, "there can be no doubt that behind this ignoble act of national betrayal rises the holy alliance of totalitarian fundamentalism with the forces of speculation, corruption, and neocolonialism."

"This is no isolated act," the PAGS continues, "but one element in a vast and multifaceted plot aimed at destabilizing the country for many years."

The PAGS statement adds that all republican institutions and all democratic and patriotic forces bear a heavy, historic responsibility for ensuring the failure of the conspiracy and for firmly and urgently taking every possible precaution to prevent the country from plunging into a new and tragic cycle of destabilization and violence whose outcome would be fatal.

Finally, "the PAGS bows with emotion and respect before the memory of militant leader Mohamed Boudiaf, an ardent patriot and steadfast democrat." In a statement entitled "the last of the just" and signed by him, Sid Ali Hattabi, president of the Democratic Generation, states that those who killed Mohamed Boudiaf were actually trying to assassinate Algeria.

Hattabi adds that Algeria is nevertheless not lost. "We must find in the message left to us by that exemplary man, that intransigent, stormy patriot, the strength to save Algeria."

Sid Ali Hattabi ends with an appeal to Algerians to assume their responsibility: "More than ever before, the People's National Army will be backed by the people united, the last and most solid rampart against chance."

The Algerian Islamic Boumediene Rally (RABI) describes the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf as a great national catastrophe and thinks its authors have no place here on earth or in heaven.

In a bulletin made public yesterday, the RABI expresses its regrets over what has become of the Algeria of a million and a half chouhada in an era of democracy and pluralism.

The RABI summons the People's National Army to assume its historic responsibilities and to spare the country and citizens the harm of an unsound policy.

The National Executive Committee of the FFS [Front of Socialist Forces] thinks the assassination of the president of the HCE [Higher State Council] "aggravates political instability in the country."

By vigorously condemning "the cowardly assassination," the FFS states in a bulletin made public yesterday that "more than ever, the country's authorities and all of our institutions must assume an attitude of calm, political lucidity, and wisdom."

"National unity, civil peace, and democratic hope must be preserved above all," the bulletin adds. The FFS "bows with respect before the memory of a man who devoted his life to the service of his country" and "calls upon the people to remain calm in these tragic circumstances."

Mohamed Boudiaf's assassination is "a hard blow for Algeria," the PSL [Social Liberal Party] states.

In a bulletin addressed to our staff, the "PSL pays homage to the mortal remains of a great activist in the national cause."

The bulletin adds that "all Social Liberals worry about the future and ask Algerians to pull themselves together and the People's National Army to assume its historic responsibility in order to preserve the unity and serenity of our country."

For the PSL, Mohamed Boudiaf "was an example of courage and self-sacrifice serving his people, for whom he died as a true soldier."

In a bulletin sent to the APS, Ahmed Benbella called the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, president of the HCE, as a "criminal act perpetrated against one of the symbols of the Algerian revolution, an act that affects Algeria's very foundations and its future. By this act, they tried to deal a blow to the memory and one of the constants of our people whom this man symbolized: love of country and attachment to national values."

The president of the MDA [Movement for Democracy in Algeria] adds that "this act has just culminated a whole spiral of violence into which Algeria has plunged and which definitely mortgages any remaining hope that we had of preventing the country from embarking upon a process threatening the country's unity."

In a bulletin sent to our staff, the FLN [National Liberation Front] Political Bureau [BP] considers "the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf as a grave precedent in Algerian political life and as a dramatic development in the process of violence rejected by the National Liberation Front, no matter what the motives and motivations."

The BP bulletin goes on to state that "the FLN pays solemn homage to the sacrifice of moudjahid Mohamed Boudiaf, a victim of duty and of the serious circumstances in which the country now finds itself.

"This tragic, painful incident requires that all Algerians, particularly its officials, demonstrate wisdom and composure in this situation," the FLN says.

For its part, the MDRA [Democratic Movement for Algerian Renewal] pays homage to the memory of President Boudiaf, "a historic figure in the National Liberation Movement who devoted his entire life to Algeria's defense."

In describing the assassination of the president of the HCE as a "barbaric act," the MDRA observes that "it was committed at a time when Algeria is preparing to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its independence." In conclusion, the MDRA wonders about the objectives of "the authors behind this odious attack."

The Social Democratic Party (PSD) was "profoundly moved by the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf, one of the eminent figures in the national movement and one of the artisans of the war of liberation."

In a bulletin made public yesterday, the PSD emphasizes that "the Algerian people do not deserve the dire consequences that will follow the assassination of one of its illustrious symbols."

The party of the Alliance for Justice and Freedom (AJL) learned with "consternation and stupor of the cowardly assassination of brother Mohamed Boudiaf, a great activist in the national, revolutionary cause from the outset."

In a bulletin sent to our staff, the AJL observes that if the purpose of this attack was to plunge the country into chaos and worsen the crisis in which it is wallowing, the Algerian people will face this new test by virtue of their maturity, their love for their homeland, their solidarity, and their national unity.

In conclusion, the "AJL warns against any attempt to meddle in our domestic affairs."

Interior Minister Blamed for Failed Security

92AF1009B Algiers EL WATAN in French 1 Jul 92 p 3

[Article by A.M.: "Inadequate Security"]

[Text] The security services of the office of the president responsible for protecting Mohamed Boudiaf were shaken by the incredible attack in Annaba.

The specialized squad, which is very professional and highly trained for precisely such missions and has used the same personnel for some 15 years, has just endured one of the most somber episodes in its existence that now discredits it in the eyes of public opinion.

Many have in fact wondered about its effectiveness since the crime that took Boudiaf's life was facilitated by a manifest lack of vigilance. Some say the carelessness was so flagrant that it poses direct questions about the service at the precise time when Algeria is suffering from various types of unrest.

However, this presidential security squad should apparently not have relied solely upon its own system of cover, inasmuch as the Ministry of Interior's security services were to provide a certain "logistical cover" or first line of protection. Here also, it is incomprehensible how the coordination

between the two services—if in fact there is any such thing—could fail to work, giving the criminals complete freedom to carry out their dirty work.

Then how could these same security services let themselves be taken in so naively? Was it a matter of poor handling of the “double-buffer zone” that should have protected Boudiaf? The terrorists planned their ambush. One therefore comes to the unavoidable conclusion that there was a total failure of control and inspection of persons and the premises, for which failure the Ministry of Interior is forced, no matter what, to bear its share of responsibility, for assigning inexperienced and sometimes incompetent agents to this so-called “cover,” for example.

Observers have therefore begun to point fingers at the minister of interior, who spoke of “total control of terrorism and violence.” According to the words of Larbi Belkheir, operations involving the “search” or even cleanup of pockets of terrorism yielded search results enabling him to advance such a certainty. And yet, with the Boudiaf assassination, terrorism not only continued to manifest itself, but reached the height of insanity.

It is true that such extremist violence has no face and that the authors of the crime against Boudiaf definitely enjoyed some complicity. And yet, Belkheir's reassuring tone also constituted real cause for calm; otherwise, what would be the reason behind it? It was perhaps responsible for the overconfidence of the presidential squad, whose casual attitude remains enigmatic. Does this mean that the Ministry of Interior is implicated in this failure, even remotely?

Will Belkheir go so far as to resign from his post, as Ali Ben Mohamed did after the escapes from the Bac? Based on ordinary rules of play, those responsible for errors so fraught with consequences no longer go unpunished, although we still have to determine the precise degrees of responsibility.

Rationale for Boudiaf Killing Discussed

92AF1009A *Algiers L'OBSERVATEUR in French*
1-7 Jul 92 p 9

[Article by Ghania Khelifi: “Who Is Behind the Assassination?”]

[Text] In addition to its grave impact on the country's future, the tragedy that recently struck Algeria on Monday, 29 June, provided fuel for the fire of those who constantly use the fundamentalist threat to draw a parallel between Algeria and Egypt. The main argument of these analysts consists of recalling that Boudiaf's assassination exhibits curious similarities with the scenario surrounding the physical annihilation of President Anwar Sadat on 6 October 1981. The second argument is the two men's consistency and determination in opposing the fundamentalist movement that has gained such a strong foothold in both countries. S.K. Nezzar's most recent statements leave no doubt about the government's determination to “eradicate fundamentalist terrorism,” while the Egyptian minister of interior recently stated “that excessive tolerance only encourages the fundamentalists. Leniency and the avoidance of confrontation encourage these elements to take extreme positions, rendering the situation even more dangerous.” Even

allowing for the different contexts, the positions of the two countries on fundamentalism converge. If Algeria experiences the Egyptian syndrome, the outcome, say the tenants of this hypothesis, cannot fail to be violence carried to the extreme: Boudiaf's assassination. This would explain the very recent statement by Al-Hodeby, spokesman for the Muslim brothers in Egypt, who in effect said that: “We have reached a point where there is no longer any respect for the will of peoples.”

The fundamentalist international also gives its blessing to Boudiaf's assassination. This is not the first time it has approved of killings. Faradj Fouda was also killed point-blank by the Islamic jihad.

The events surrounding Boudiaf's assassination lead one to believe that it was perpetrated by fanatical elements, a kind of suicide commando whose authors could be from the fundamentalist movement that infiltrated Boudiaf's own entourage or from in-circles having political-commercial interests to defend. Note that Boudiaf used the word “mafia.” The omnipresent mafia prompts some to draw another parallel which, given both the old and recent frictions so common in the corridors of power in Algeria, turns out to be equally likely. The crime of 29 June would then have been but the culmination of another: the Kennedy syndrome, in other words, the abject exposure of a bloody fight between rival interests and its ultimate conclusion aimed at protecting privileges threatened by Boudiaf. The files on corruption, the clan war and, some say, the *trabendo* represented by Hadj Bettou were all targeted by the late president.

How to stop a man who had steadfastly refused to succumb to the siren song of old regimes? Only death broke his stride. And yet, such an act might also be the expression of the convergence of several spheres that silenced any and all discord in order to handle the most urgent matter at hand: liquidating their common enemy. Political-criminal interests may well have joined with fundamentalist fanaticism to accomplish the crime. This hypothesis, the most likely of all, is frightening in terms of what it reveals about the sordidness of the workings of the system.

Destabilization Seen as Motive for Killing Boudiaf

92AF1009D *Algiers LE SOIR D'ALGERIE in French*
1 Jul 92 p 7

[Article by Bouziane Ahmed Khoudja: “Troubling Coincidences”]

[Text] The cowardly assassination of President Boudiaf poses enormous questions concerning the country's future. Several scenarios are possible under the current circumstances. Nevertheless, what were the motives of those who conspired against the president, the government, and the country?

Oran—It is said in the sad fate of the late President Boudiaf that he will not see his Algeria united behind his plan aimed at getting the country back on its feet, bringing it the serenity it has lost, and finally, fighting against the widespread crisis that has shaken it.

With the patriotic fervor so characteristic of him, the late President Boudiaf tried, in a very short period of time, to rally our "divided Algerians" so that they might finally become the sons of this people that has never doubted its unity or patriotism under any circumstances.

It is also said that in his attempt at "national reconciliation," Boudiaf will have failed all along the line, costing him his life. While the murderous hand of the colonialist enemy may not have beaten him, it took over 30 more years for the very sons for whom he fought and freed the country to assassinate him in such cowardly fashion.

Boudiaf's paternal feelings were not able to contain this bestial animosity that motivated the splinter groups backing the "Lebanonization" of Algeria. And yet, God knows the president gave everything he had in a few months in order that the Algeria which he wanted to see calm and serene once and for all might live.

And yet, if that isolated act—one must call it that because it was not the wish of all Algerians—has dramatic consequences for the country, it nevertheless remains certain that the Algerians will once again demonstrate dignity and composure.

As for the authors of this criminal act, the objectives of their action range far beyond Boudiaf's life.

In this preliminary stage, it would probably be risky to make any statement concerning the reasons for the crime. Nevertheless, certain aspects of politics can define at least a few rather important elements. For example, we know that this horrible criminal act coincides with the trial of the FIS [Front for Islamic Salvation] "shaykhs," and people recall bulletins circulated before the trial to the effect that if the FIS leaders were tried, the Islamist terrorist movement would not fail to "lop off the heads" of high government officials.

Another significant fact is perhaps the all-out crusade against corruption. Public opinion has been promised shocking revelations. Furthermore, clans and machines are pitted against one another in a bitter struggle for power. On the heels of Chadli's ouster, Hamrouche's rout, the chastening of the political parties, and the eradication of the FIS, the government, headed by Boudiaf, might not be safe.

The authors of this attack probably hoped to use it to sow an uprising that would destabilize the government and the country. Only the future will tell for what purposes.

For the time being, we have observed a feeling of consternation and pain that can be read on most faces. The wish of every single individual is that there be a halt to this killing between the sons of the same country, the same people.

Single Assassin in Boudiaf Murder Doubted

92AF1044C Algiers *LE SOIR D'ALGERIE* in French
6 Jul 92 p 8

[Article by A. Allia: "Assassin Reportedly 26-Year-Old Second Lieutenant From Meskiana"—first paragraph is *LE SOIR D'ALGERIE* introduction]

[Text] In wake of the very dramatic assassination of Mr. Boudiaf, president of the HCE [Higher State Council], the

people of Annaba continue to ask questions about the exact circumstances of the attack and the direct and indirect implications it may have for the future of the country...

Annaba—The questions raised most often have to do with the nature of the silent partners to the liquidation, i.e., the political tendency that stands to benefit from it.

In the view of many, there is no doubt Mr. Boudiaf courageously and openly confronted many previously untouchable issues, thus exposing himself to grave danger.

Some confirmed reports—not to mention the rumor circulating in the town where the tragedy took place—may shed at least a little light on the mystery surrounding the affair.

The theory of a lone gunman who easily and quite coolly slipped through the late president's protective cordon no longer holds water. All too many of the circumstances surrounding the Annaba tragedy show very clearly the liquidation was painstakingly planned. According to reliable sources, the gunman and about 10 of his accomplices are in the hands of security officials. The executioner was reportedly a member of the late Mr. Boudiaf's personal guard, in fact a second lieutenant in the special group dispatched from Algiers for an upcoming protective mission. The assassin is reportedly a 26-year-old native of Meskiana who is married and the father of two children. The description we were given is fairly consistent with that given by witnesses to the Monday morning assassination.

Security Surrounding Boudiaf Examined

92AF1048C Algiers *L'OBSERVATEUR* in French
8-14 Jul 92 p 7

[Article by Samia Khorsi: "Some Facts and Some Questions"]

[Text] One week after the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, it is still difficult to determine with certainty what actually happened. There are many obscure facets to the case, and the inaccessibility of official sources is not helping to elucidate them. In fact, the assassination of Algeria's fourth president raises an infinite number of questions about the circumstances in which it occurred. Some questions remain unanswered while others have several answers varying with the theories pieced together from the facts, the corroborating accounts, and the bits of information available.

For example, what about the possibility of a breach of secrecy regarding Mr. Boudiaf's itinerary? In theory, it should not have been known until 24 hours before his arrival. But according to local press correspondents, the details of the schedule were circulating in Annaba 10 days in advance.

Another anomaly noted at the Maison de la Culture in Annaba, and it involves the president's safety, is the fact that the now infamous drapes, which prevented the assassin from being seen, had not been removed. According to experts in the matter, never is the president to be seated in front of draperies; the space at his back must be unobstructed and visible. Was it negligence? A fluke? Or was it part of "the plot?"

Whatever the case, the drapes kept many secrets, among them the origin of the crackling noise that caused Mr. Boudiaf to pause 27 minutes into his speech. Many observers at the scene identified it as a gunshot. Reporters who were sent to Annaba to cover the president's visit described the noise as a "detonation," an "explosion," or "the sound made by a microphone being disconnected" (the words of Benmohamed of EL MOUDJAHID). Others likened it to a shot fired from a gun equipped with a silencer. That would fit the assertion that a bodyguard was killed behind the draperies.

It is certain, however, that the "diversion" created by the explosion achieved its purpose. If it was a hand grenade as some witnesses claim, it would indeed have distracted the members of the unit commanded by the assassin, which would explain the sound of footsteps reported by the press following the assassination.

Some four or five seconds elapsed before the killer appeared. The first anomaly, say the security experts, was the absence of bodyguards, at least those assigned to protect the president at close quarters. Normally, a guard should have positioned himself at that very moment to shield the president with his own body. But was that guard close enough to do so? Journalists had noted the absence of security guards at one point and a concentration of guards to the president's right. In either case, the assassin would have had a perfect opportunity to carry out his deed.

Another important question pertains to the assassin himself: What was he doing behind the drapes? To our knowledge, as a member of the special intervention brigade, he would not be allowed access to the area immediately surrounding the president, which is reserved for his bodyguards.

Although an assassin has been identified, was there a second assassin? Many journalists believe that they saw a second man dressed in civilian clothes, unlike the first who was wearing a "ninja" uniform similar to the one associated with the riot squads. It was he who reportedly sprayed the front row of seats with gunfire. The same reporters also assert that the first gunman was shot down.

Panic and confusion reigned. The scene was one of pandemonium. The bursts of shots that rang out 10 minutes later in the foyer of the Maison de la Culture and outside the building are another puzzle. They have been attributed to an exchange of gunfire between the CNS [National Security Companies] and civilians or between members of the CNS. How was the assassin able to escape from the building? Apparently, the security forces stationed outside were unable to recognize him as the president's killer.

It is certain, however, that a viewing of the complete footage of the event would clear up a few enigmas, while other puzzles remain intact pending the results of the investigation.

Government Warns Against Disinformation Campaign

92AF1009E Algiers EL WATAN in French 6 Jul 92 p 8

[Text] Yesterday the Government Council condemned "the campaign of destabilization organized within the framework of action to destabilize the government."

The Government Council believes that "the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf is one of the most tragic developments of this action of destabilization," and in a bulletin made public warns "public opinion and all media" against "biased" rumors "and fantastic information cunningly propagated for the purpose of plunging the people into despair and perfecting the crime perpetrated against the nation and its president."

It recalls that the national investigative commission created by a legislative order of the Higher State Council and the competent judicial bodies alone have the power to release information concerning the conduct and results of the investigation into the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf.

FIS Trial: Step Toward 'Reconciliation'

92AF1044A Paris LE MONDE in French 17 Jul 92 p 1

[Editorial: "Easing the Crisis"]

[Text] Twelve years of prison for Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj. As speedy as it may have been, with the accused and defense refusing to participate in the proceedings, the trial of the two "stars" of the ex-Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) before the military tribunal of Blida ended on Wednesday 15 July with the imposition of a relatively lenient sentence. The state wanted to show its magnanimity vis-a-vis the fundamentalist leaders, who reject human justice and might have been more than willing to play the role of "martyrs."

In the first hearing, their brief appearance in the courtroom and the demands they immediately made as a condition for remaining there—one of which was the presence of foreign observers—showed clearly their intent to use this highly politicized trial and all its media potential to reverse roles and put the regime itself on trial. The military judges, at the risk of appearing to be in an excessive hurry, prevented them from turning themselves into the prosecution.

By conceding that during the tumultuous events of June 1991 (dozens dead and hundreds wounded) the accused were under pressure to commit the offenses with which they were charged, by conceding too that there was a sort of collective responsibility for what had happened, the prosecution forfeited the right to ask for the death penalty. By the end of the trial, thanks also to certain extenuating circumstances, the leaders of the ex-FIS no longer seemed to fit the terrifying image the regime had tried to ascribe to them.

Would events have taken a different turn—toward intensified polarization—but for the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf, which served to make the regime's position even more precarious? The army, however resolved to wage an "implacable war" against politico-religious terrorism, seems not to have wanted a pitiless sentence imposed on Messrs. Madani and Belhadj. The chief prosecutor hinted at this even before the trial opened. He alluded to it again after the closing speech for the prosecution, justifying its moderation on grounds of concern to "contribute to an easing of the crisis."

The outcome thus has all the markings of a discreet overture to moderate elements of the Islamist family—especially

those upset by the violence and opprobrium—with whom the regime has continued to seek contact and whom it has tried unceasingly to win over to its cause. All the same, it may be a bit premature to claim that the trial marks a giant step toward “national reconciliation.” Such a step would presuppose that the fundamentalists and Algeria’s new leaders share a minimum of values and common objectives.

The regime, notwithstanding its hesitations, seems gradually to be moving toward acceptance of the mounting evidence that any durable resolution of the “crisis” must be based on something more than mere repression. Hasn’t the collegial presidency just examined the “modalities” of holding a dialogue with what the country calls its “dynamic forces”? Unpleasant as the fact may be, the Islamists are a part of that group.

Abdesslam’s Industrial Goals, Frustrations Noted

92AF1048A Algiers EL WATAN in French 11 Jul 92 p 3

[Article by K. Chehrit: “Belaid Abdesslam’s Unfulfilled Dream of Industrialization”—first two paragraphs are EL WATAN introduction]

[Text] On several occasions, in interviews with the Algerian press and in his book on the Algerian natural gas industry “Strategies and Issues,” Mr. Belaid Abdesslam has deplored the fact that his “industrialization effort remains incomplete.”

Mr. Abdesslam has consistently advocated a positive assessment of the industrialization of Algeria, which began under Boumediene and was called into question as of the early 1980’s when Chadli came to power. In his opinion, Algeria had to industrialize for various reasons—political, economic, social, and strategic.

A well-endowed country spanning a large land area and an exporter of oil and gas into the bargain, Algeria could not remain a passive economic player; otherwise it would have fallen victim to the “banana republic” mentality, Belaid Abdesslam said. That explains Algeria’s ambitious industrialization policy, which was a realistic one as well because it sought to make the most of the country’s oil and gas resources and in turn reinvigorate the other sectors—agriculture, in particular.

The intention was to make Algeria prosperous, industrious, and economically sovereign. The dynamic that was set in motion by this policy did bear fruit. As of 1974, Algeria’s GNP [gross national product] was rising, and per capita income along with it. As an example, per capita income was more than four times that of Morocco and Tunisia. Better still, Algeria attained the very promising status of “newly industrialized country.” In 1977, Algeria was approaching the per capital income level of certain industrialized countries—Spain, for example.

Thus, Belaid Abdesslam’s greatest regret is the failure to complete his industrialization effort. He was highly critical of the policy implemented by Abdelhamid Brahimi and his minister of energy, Belkacem Nabi.

The abandonment of the oil and gas development plan (the “val-hyd” plan) was a catastrophe in his view, and so was

the abandonment of contracts with El Paso and others. Mr. Abdesslam believes that 40 billion dollars were lost in the space of a decade as a result of shortsighted policymaking.

That policymaking turned the debt into what it is today: a burden that impoverishes Algeria and its citizens. Like the late president Boumediene, Mr. Belaid Abdesslam projects the image of a statesman inclined toward austerity. That is why he will never forgive the “former governing team” for abandoning the oil and gas development plan and LNG III [liquefied natural gas], which resulted in annual lost earnings of 2.5 billion dollars in natural gas, 1.2 billion dollars in oil, 0.7 billion dollars in condensate, and 0.7 billion dollars in liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

That is 5 billion dollars a year in foreign exchange that Algeria might have had, according to Mr. Abdesslam. “Had such a disaster not occurred, Algeria would not be burdened today with an external debt of nearly 20 billion dollars, if not more. Five billion dollars a year in additional oil and gas revenues over the past few years: That equals or even exceeds Algeria’s present debt burden, which is a mortgage on the economic future of our people.”

In support of his analysis, Mr. Abdesslam cites the opportunities for industrialization that Algeria had to forgo because she was slipping in the world oil and gas market. Industrial projects were abandoned outright because of that decline. Among them, an industrial vehicle and diesel engine manufacturing complex at Tiaret, Ain Oussera, and Setif; an iron and steel plant in the west in conjunction with the start of mining activities at the Gara-Djebilet mine; a passenger car manufacturing plant in Oran; an all-terrain vehicle factory in Barika; a petrochemical plant in Skikda; a tire manufacturing plant in Bouira; an iron and steel factory in Jijel and a special steel plant in Ain M’Lila. Those and other projects were abandoned following the death of Boumediene when Belaid Abdesslam lost his seat in the cabinet.

Gendarmerie Notes 27 Sabotage Acts Against PTT Equipment

LD3007215792 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in French 1800 GMT 30 Jul 92

[Excerpt] The first figures on the sabotage actions directed at PTT [Post and Telecommunications] equipment have been published by the National Gendarmerie: 27 sabotage actions have been recorded until now in the 15 provinces, including those of Tlemcen and Blida, writes APS quoting a communique by the National Gendarmerie command. We also note that three people were arrested in Tlemcen yesterday: They refused to obey summonses delivered by a National Gendarmerie patrol when spotted near the main telephone exchange. The three individuals attempted to escape in a Tlemcen-registered car. One of them was injured. [passage omitted including indistinct portions]

Press Agency Claims About Tiaret Isolation Denied

LD0208085392 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 0800 GMT 2 Aug 92

[Text] The city of Tiaret was not isolated following the sabotage attack. This was said by the Ministry of Posts and

Telecommunications in a statement issued yesterday denying the news reported by the Associated Press news agency.

The ministry added that automatic telephone and telex communications were normal and that it was expected that the damage would be repaired this Sunday.

The same source pointed out that the matter was related to the break of the cable designated for approximately 1,000 subscribers in the industrial area.

Press 'Targeted' in 2 Bomb Attacks

92AF1014B Algiers EL WATAN in French 5 Jul 92 p 2

[Text] A bomb consisting of two sticks of TNT and an ordinary flat battery was planted yesterday morning inside Air Algerie's central office in Oran. Discovered in time, the bomb was moved out of the building by a very coolheaded police officer.

The officer placed the bomb at the base of a tree near a large vacant lot.

As soon as the alert had been sounded, the police evacuated the site and called in security engineers who isolated the bomb in a vacant lot where they then destroyed it. A technical study of the bomb would have provided many clues to the exact intentions of its maker and his knowledge of explosives.

By merely looking at the bomb from a distance of 20 meters, it was impossible to determine the type of detonator used or how it would have been activated. Thousands of bystanders watched from a safe distance as the police were deployed.

The safety of the population was clearly of greater concern to the police than any technical considerations.

At the same time, another bomb was planted inside the offices of the newspaper EL DJOUMHOURIA in its sports department. In all likelihood, those responsible had intended for the two bombs to explode simultaneously. Their apparent goal was to create a climate of fear and a psychology of terror.

The bomb in EL DJOUMHOURIA's offices did explode. The fact that the greatest pressure was exerted on the window raises some doubt as to the type of explosive used: TNT or plastic? An analysis of the method and instruments used by the person or persons responsible for this double crime who want to instill rampant fear and appear to have a power that is belied by the very rudimentary equipment used. [sentence as published]

These two incidents have recreated the climate that Oran experienced in 1962 at the hands of the OAS [Secret Army Organization], which the city remembers with horror. The residents of Oran who were questioned while standing in the huddled crowd of onlookers expressed no fear. Quite the contrary, they could barely contain their anger at the criminals who are trying to sow the same climate of fear in Oran.

"I would force that bomb down his throat if I could lay my hands on him," said a young man of 18, referring to the culprit. One detail left a strong impression on the thousands

of onlookers: the calm and casualness of the young policeman who moved the bomb as though handling a filthy object.

The police officer's feat had an extraordinary effect on the crowd. Breaking into applause for the officer, the crowd expressed its determination not to be intimidated by anonymous killers.

In the opinion of one resident, "journalists were the intended targets. The bomb planted at the Air Algerie office was probably intended for the press club located in the same building, but it is kept under police guard."

In addition, it was learned from police sources that a bomb alert occurred yesterday afternoon at about 1500 on the premises of CNAN [Algerian National Shipping Company] in the harbor of Oran.

Press Available to Prisoners Still Controlled

92AF1044D Algiers EL WATAN in French 8 Jul 92 p 16

[Article by E. Metaoui: "Prisoners Given 'Selective' Access to Press"—first paragraph is EL WATAN introduction]

[Text] Although the media in Algeria has undergone explosive growth, and for the first time there is an independent press, which has also led to increasingly wide readership, certain laws and other decrees, rendered completely obsolete by subsequent events, have not kept pace. The authorities responsible for reconsidering them—or at least updating them—have not deigned to do so...

The case of the ministerial decree of the Justice Ministry promulgated 23 February 1972, pursuant to the penal reform enacted at that time, is a perfect illustration of this ridiculous situation. Under that decree, the only press organs to be made available to detainees were "ECH-CHAAB, EL MOUDJAHID, REVOLUTION ET TRAVAIL, and EL-DJEICH.

The director of the El-Harrach penal center makes no bones about it. "We simply apply the law here. We have no problem with prisoners reading the newspapers referred to in the decree. However, depending on our assessment of the content and subjects treated by other press organs, we have discretionary power to determine which ones are allowed to come in (to the prison)," he says.

The head of Serkadji prison spouts the same line: "Those provisions are contained in the penal reform that went into force in 1972. It's up to the tutelary ministry to decide the matter."

Mr. Chaabane, director of penal administration and reeducation at the Ministry of Justice, tries to be conciliatory and says he is aware of the aberration of the "notorious" decree.

"We are sensitive to this issue, and citizens have the right to complain and raise the problem. Our people are currently working on a revision of this decree, which is completely archaic, and I can assure you that within a month the list will be expanded to include all the newspapers," he said.

Accords in Mining Research Discussed*92AF1024A Algiers EL WATAN in French
29 Jun 92 p 3*

[Article by K. Boukherissa: "Going into Partnership"]

[Text] The National Office of Geological and Mining Exploration (ORGM) and the American company Black Hole Technologies recently signed a basic agreement for mineral exploration activities.

According to the chairman of the ORGM's board of directors, Mr. Mourad Maache, the contract covers joint exploration activities, feasibility studies, and the mining of ores, if any are discovered, within perimeters to be established on a contractual basis.

Under the terms of the contract, Black Hole Technologies, the leader of a consortium of American and Canadian mining companies, agrees to provide the ORGM with a special "dry-processing" technology along with a license to manufacture related equipment in Algeria, said Mr. Maache.

He also mentioned the possibility that a development plan will be drawn up for a number of gold deposits, which are the foremost concern of the joint venture.

Joint ventures of this kind are permitted under Law 91-24 of 6 December 1991, which authorizes the involvement of private Algerian and foreign capital in the development and mining of mineral resources in Algeria.

According to the ORGM's chairman, other discussions are under way with mining companies that are subsidiaries of the large international oil companies. They include AGIP (the mining subsidiary of ENI of Italy), Billiton International Mining (subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell Mining of Holland), BHP (subsidiary of Australia's BHP Petroleum and Britain's Reunion).

In the initial phase, any agreements for joint prospecting and mining activities would be focussed on zinc, sulphur, gold, and diamonds.

The involvement of Algerian investors will be limited, in the initial phase, to traces and formations of marble, granite, and other ornamental stones, salt, and any other deposits that have not yet been mined for various reasons. The ORGM is a public entity of a commercial and industrial nature. It is responsible for promoting mineral exploration and the development of the mining sector.

The ORGM also has the public service mission of handling technical data and information pertaining to geology, mineral exploration, and the promotion of mining resources.

Tourism Sector Reportedly Stagnant*92AF1014C Algiers EL WATAN in French
7 Jul 92 pp 1,2*

[Article by Faical Metaoui: "A Poor Summer Season"]

[Text] The summer season may be entering its second month but it has yet to get under way in Tipaza. Mr. Baadj, the general director of EGTT (Tipaza Tourism Management Company) is openly pessimistic: "This is a disastrous state

of affairs. To take Matares as an example, the two hotels within the perimeter are operating at 20 percent of their capacity. Most of the rooms are vacant. There is a small contingent of tourists from Poland, but foreign tourists are not exactly lining up to come to Algeria," he said, attributing this waning of interest to "hyped" reports in the Western media, which have painted the situation in Algeria as "explosive and hopeless."

"Tourism is a very sensitive industry that fluctuates with the social and political climate. When things are going badly, it dwindles to next to nothing," Mr. Baadj continued, adding that tourism is not likely to recover following the death of Mr. Boudiaf and terrorist acts at various locations across the country.

Has the Tipaza tourist complex lost its clientele solely because of the political situation in Algeria? Did rising prices dissuade the more determined vacationers?

Guests at Matares openly expressed their unhappiness: "It is too expensive. At these prices, we would rather relax at home," said the father of a family. A room at the Hotel de la Baie "costs 510 Algerian dinars a day for one person all meals included and 357 dinars with only one meal included."

A house in Matares rents for 543 Algerian dinars a day. In Tipaza Village, a bungalow and full board costs 35,000 dinars a month (all taxes included) and 10,000 dinars less for half-board.

Officials at EGTT attribute the higher prices to the high value-added tax of 27 percent.

They claim that all rates will be lowered (by as much as 50 percent) as soon as summer—the main tourist season—is over. In other words, not until October....

The Ravages of Monopoly [by Ahmed Ancer]

Algeria's tourism industry has entered another summer season handicapped by the same problems that have caused it to contract considerably over the past two decades, but even more so since the beginning of the 1980's. Policy changes instituted by the Chadli administration resulted in greater bureaucratic pressure on an already deficient management and the industry fell into the hands of a ruthless and greedy elite. Algeria's tourism sector has lost almost all of its credibility while for the world as a whole, tourism has been expanding since the early 1950's, surpassing all other areas of economic activity with an average annual growth rate of 12.5 percent.

The tourism industry in Algeria is stagnant. Compared to its counterparts in Morocco and Tunisia, Algerian tourism has remained ridiculously under-developed in terms of capacity for a country that is twice the size of its two neighbors put together and has the added special attraction of its vast southern region.

There are more than 110,000 hotel beds in Tunisia; more than 100,000 in Morocco; and only 53,000 in Algeria.

What is worse, the most prestigious venues are floundering, incapable of sustaining themselves financially and unable to muster the effort that would put them back on their feet.

According to some in the industry, another infusion of state funds, whether in the name of rehabilitation or working capital loans, would certainly not correct the situation for companies involved in tourism, which have taken a beating in the very season when they were supposed to be capitalizing on their assets and earning returns on their investments.

A re-righting of the situation now seems impossible unless a number of radical changes are made quickly in response to the new economic reality and free-market rules. The latter have already introduced competition into the industry—formidable competition at that: The ACCOR chain has joined with Sofitel in El Hamma and Hilton is working with SAHLI in the Pins Maritimes.

Whatever the case, government authorities have made up their minds regarding any public-sector role: "The state will not give another penny to the companies in the tourism industry," we were told a few days ago by an emphatic and insistent director at the Secretariat for Tourism, Mr. Bekar. The restructuring experience apparently left an indelible mark. Despite bailouts by the Treasury, the situation worsened. "In the last decade alone, the state put too much money into tourism only to see the industry limp along. The restructuring of tourism companies cost 31 billion centimes in public funds, including an infusion of 5 billion to give the industry a jump start," Mr. Bekar continued. As in all other sectors of the economy, parasitic capitalism replaced the state-run capitalism of the Boumediene era, because the companies could not be privatized and thereby divided up among those who controlled the government (as was the case in the transfer of real estate), and it adapted to state ownership by acquiring usufruct or by diverting entire blocks of state assets in one way or another. Let us look at a few examples chosen for the fact that they are still current and continue to impose constraints and financial burdens on companies in the industry. A section of more than 50 vacation homes at Club des Pins was taken over by the upper echelons of Chadli's governmental elite who paid an insignificant amount of rent (if they paid any at all). In other words, Club des Pins financed the affluent life styles of men in power, all the while falling into red ink. The absurd was pushed to the extreme when one of the occupants, confident of his position and the impunity that came with it, converted "his" villa into a veterinary clinic for his son.

Absurdities

For a while, canine care enhanced the range of activities at the prestigious Club des Pins. For many months, in fact, dogs received veterinary care at Club des Pins. The occupants are still there, awaiting a possible sale of the villas, which they have occupied free of charge for years. If all the costs borne by the company were added up, the rent paid by the occupants of the "shark zone" would cover only a portion of the benefits they have received.

The "shark zone" at the Club des Pins is far from being an exception. It merely houses the highest ranking members of

the elite. The mid- and low-levels of the nomenklatura, not to be left behind, took their share of the pie in other tourist complexes and venues. Former ministers, former walis, former members of the central committee of the FLN [National Liberation Front], former members of what have you can be found at Moretti or Chrea or many other vacation spots originally intended to enhance an industry that was supposed to generate foreign exchange. Obviously, the advantages were proportional to rank. The higher the rank, the greater the advantages, as a few wealthy exceptions were allowed among the dignitaries of the regime.

Language and Damage

Such practices contrary to the rudiments of good economic sense were knowingly carried out. Proof of that can be found in a rental agreement for a villa, a copy of which was given to us by Mr. Ait Abdallah, a former manager in the industry. The agreement was signed in September 1983 by the Management Company of the Sahel Tourism Center (EGCS, Moretti) and a former member of the FLN's central committee. The agreement "made vacation sites available for seasonal use and not for permanent residence."

The same point is reiterated at a later stage: "Because the services involve hotel lodgings and tourism, the rental is deemed valid on a daily basis." But the director who signed for the company and who emphasized in those terms the commercial nature of the villa quickly capitulated in the following paragraph that reads: "However, the client has permission to occupy the site for a maximum duration of one year." The final clause supposedly offers an added guarantee by stipulating that the future renter will be forcibly evicted if he violates the terms of the agreement: "The client agrees to return the keys to the director of the center at the termination of this contract without being notified of the need to do so. Should he fail to return the keys when the contract expires, the rental site will immediately be inspected at his cost and risk and recovered by the center, notwithstanding any damages to be paid."

Does anyone believe that this politician vacated the property as unmistakably stipulated in the agreement? Well, the honorable member (back in 1983) of the FLN's central committee is still renting from EGCS in July 1992. Moreover, that villa is the focus of a legal dispute between the politician and the villa's previous occupant, Said Ait Abdallah who provided us with a translation of a statement signed by the state prosecutor in Blida.

The statement "attests that the court in Blida ruled in favor of Mr. Ait Abdallah Said, ordering that he be reinstated in his professional position and that a second ruling on 21 March 1988—confirmed by the Supreme Court on 31 December 1990—ordered that he be allowed to occupy Villa (number withheld by EL WATAN editor) at Club des Pins." The translation apparently confused the place of work (Club des Pins) with the location of the villa (Moretti).

The document goes on to say that "the prosecutor's office in Blida received an emissary of the Ministry of Justice, Office of Civil Cases, on 21 July 1991, ordering by virtue of 47/DAC/91 that the prosecutor's office enforce the two rulings."

The politician has apparently settled in for good in Moretti. According to the report of an official investigation requested by Ait Abdallah, the politician has vacated his domicile of El Mouradia. Information gathered by the court officer indicates that he has rented the property to a foreigner for the past three years. To be continued....

Tipaza-Village: Not All Is Well [by Faycal Metaoui]

On this beautiful summer morning, silence hovers over Tipaza-Village (6 km away from the town). Expectations of a large influx in July were quickly dashed.

The well-maintained (at least on first inspection) and white-washed bungalows would seem unoccupied were it not for a few young vacationers who roam about in brilliantly colored sports clothes and the strains of music heard from radios in small shops. "I can't understand why people are reluctant to come. Some people paid as much as 15,000 dinars to reserve a bungalow."

"For now, we are afloat thanks to benefits contracts with state-run companies," said Mr. Djababsa (director of tourist activities and lodging).

A young and tanned Algerian resident vacationing at Tipaza-Village admitted that his dream vacation had failed to materialize: "We are disappointed. Every day is as bland as the next. No atmosphere, no shows—nothing. And it's too expensive. We rented the bungalow at 6,500 dinars a week and the stores 'rip us off' with high prices," he said.

His feelings are in fact shared by a majority of vacationers who complain of a "racket" among the shopkeepers. Under a contract with the EGTT, the shops are allowed to remain open for six months of the year (from April through September) for a fee estimated at 60,000 Algerian dinars.

"That is nothing compared with the profits that the shopkeepers make," said Mr. Djababsa who insisted that he does not monitor prices since "that is the task of the Office of Competition and Prices in the wilayah of Tipaza to whom the contracts are sent." The entertainment planned for Tipaza-Village, with Hassiba Amrouche and Houari Aouinet heading the bill, was cancelled in observance of the national mourning period. The schedule of shows is expected to resume in mid-July.

"The Horse Club" and the "Theatre de la Verduze" (450 seats) will host several shows.

Tennis matches, sailing regattas, and diving competitions are among the events planned.

The club "Come d'Or" sits atop a cliff 800 km from Tipaza village and is reached by trail through a small forest of coastal pines. It consists of a number of whitewashed bungalows and is surrounded by small beaches where seaweed and pebbles vie for space.

The pleasant and natural setting is enhanced by a rotisserie called "Le Gourbi" near the roman theater. The establishment caters solely to foreign tourists.

Consequently, the prices there are higher than anywhere else. For example, a full day's room and board in a bungalow costs 932 Algerian dirhams. "We wanted to make the Come d'Or a tourist club similar to clubs in Tunisia and Morocco," the director, Mr. Chaib, told us.

Since 1987, the club has had a contract with an Italian company that was to send gradually increasing numbers of Dutch, Russian, and Italian tourists over a five-year period. This year, business is flat! No one took the chance of showing up. Immediately following the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, bungalow reservations were quickly canceled and those already on vacation shortened their stays. All predictions of a good season this year have proved wrong. According to Mr. Chaib, lost earnings are estimated at 120,000 Algerian dirhams a day on the basis of the current occupancy rate (40 percent or less). When added to ordinary expenses, that amounts to a serious financial burden.

[Box, p 2]

Joint Ventures: Yes, But....

Is a joint venture the solution for a company that is unable to make the most of its assets (due to lower demand)? Excluding their contract with an Italian tour operator that will probably not be renewed at the end of this year, officials at EGTT-Tipaza have tried but were not always able to interest potential foreign partners who consistently question Algeria's political stability. "We tried to enter into contact with European tour operators who are very willing to cooperate with us but the state of the country makes them hesitate to commit themselves." In a word, they do not want to invest in a country with an uncertain future. The problems being what they are, cooperative ventures have become almost impossible.

The National Office of Tourism (ONT) "has the responsibility to promote tourism and Algeria's image abroad. It withholds 1 percent of our revenues," noted the EGTT official, Mr. Baaj.

Citizens Express Little Confidence in Future

92AF1044B Algiers LE SOIR D'ALGERIE in French
6 Jul 92 p 4

[Article by Nabila Azzi and Fadhila Baghdadi: "Citizens Don't Trust Anyone Now"—first paragraph is LE SOIR D'ALGERIE introduction]

[Text] A week after the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, president of the Higher State Council [HCE], daily life seems to have returned to normal, though it is clear that residents of Algiers are trying to mask their anxieties behind a facade of calm.

A word, a name is all it takes to loosen their tongues and reveal how distraught they are. Whether the reaction was one of surprise, disappointment or reassurance, the naming of Ali Kafi to the HCE presidency has left no one indifferent.

Obviously, the man on the street "doesn't know Ali Kafi" and the biographies published in the Algerian press have been written largely for the benefit of "those who knew of him only by name."

While older people talk vaguely about his past political career—"he is History, the Revolution"—in the eyes of young people he remains an illustrious unknown, "a man you can't trust and whose first speech was (as one merchant put it) only blah blah blah."

Although some were surprised by his appointment—"we were thinking more of Nezzar or Taleb Ibrahimi", one group of unemployed young people told us—others opined that "at all events the decision had to be made by the HCE alone, because they are still the ones in charge."

A group of young students wearing the "hijab" told us "the appointment of Ali Kafi is no more legitimate than the naming of Boudiaf. The decision should be made by the people."

Whenever Kafi's name is mentioned, people talk about Boudiaf: "He was the last chance, our last card." Today, Algiers residents openly admit their anxieties: "Although we don't yet know what Kafi can do, he can't possibly replace Boudiaf." As one teacher told us, "he is the only one to really begin a dialogue with his people. His words were plain and simple, the rhetoric of the 1950s, a style of discourse to which Algerian young people have not been exposed. His biggest asset is that he was clean and new, not part of the old regime."

Intellectuals and others all agree that at this point "it makes no sense to go on with the same people, we need a big housecleaning, we must demolish the old system and throw out those who represent it."

Even though Ali Kafi's speech was superficially reassuring—and faithful to Boudiaf's vision of Algerian society—he is "not very convincing," according to some, indeed "not at all credible" in the eyes of the most distrustful.

"If he continues the way Boudiaf was going, he won't live long," we were told by a group of 'hittistes' [idle young

people]; if he does like Chadli, he has nothing to fear. He can't afford to go up against corruption and the mafia."

However that may be, everyone questioned hopes that this man, "whom we know only by name, will follow the path laid out by Boudiaf." One fact is undeniable: Algerians are more distrustful than ever. "We don't even have faith in the HCE any longer, we're ruled by the mafia," says one student, "and it's impossible to find a man of Boudiaf's stature." Asked about the investigation into the assassination of the late president, some maintain "there's no point in lying to us, we know who killed him."

Today, it seems difficult—to put it mildly—to pass judgment on "a man we don't know. We must wait." "Wait for what—the future?" retorts one unemployed youth. "The future isn't here any longer—it's in Spain. Besides, what matters to me today are the sheikhs."

Students Found Unprepared in New Technologies

92AF1024B Algiers ALGER REPUBLICAIN in French
29 Jun 92 p 7

[Text] Given the technological gap and dependence on Western technology, the problem that Algeria must solve is the transfer of technology. What role does the education system play in this field? It is apparently doing a poor job of preparing students for new technologies. The reasons are as follows:

1. Technology instruction is given a negligible place in primary and intermediate school curricula. Contrary to claims made in official documents, the teaching of technology continues to be more theory than practice. The technology program at the primary and intermediate level has never been developed because of the colossal investments that it would require.

2. In secondary schools, technological and technical instruction is still underdeveloped. Fewer than 20 percent of students are advised to enroll in it. It lags behind because of the large investments it requires and because of the social stigma associated with the manual work it entails. The experiment of introducing a technological discipline failed for various reasons that revealed a lack of expertise in program conception, teacher training problems, and a lack of equipment.

3. The schools have apparently failed to encourage students to take an active, assertive attitude toward the technical object. In an analysis of the Arabic language textbook for the sixth grade, it was observed that the schools reinforce a sense of awe toward the technical object rather than curiosity and a sense of conquest.

4. Generally speaking, the schools do not attach importance to the development of creativity, particularly in technical fields. Academic courses allow no room for the development of the imagination. Arts courses are undervalued and marginalized.

5. The schools continue to function as ivory towers. The student is given little concrete experience of the economy which is the primary arena of technological development.

6. The social stigmas mentioned above are also present in higher education. Young people prefer traditional programs of unquestionable social standing to technical degrees in general and to shorter training programs, in particular.

7. Because little interest is seen in less conventional forms of education such as adult education (literacy and continuing education) and therefore in raising the population's overall level of education, it has not been possible to create an environment favorable to the development of the country's technological potential. The quality of the human and material environment in which engineers and researchers work determines how well they perform.

Cooperative Programs Offer Youth Alternatives

92AF0987A Algiers AL-SHA'B in Arabic 14 Jun 92 p 2

[Article by Salah Draji: "The Road Is Arduous But the Journey Has Begun"]

[Text] The phrase "youth employment" is repeatedly bandied about in the media as an empty phrase that has seen no implementation in fact, causing some people to doubt the veracity of youth employment programs, even though some young people have benefitted from vocational cooperatives. Some have been qualified and equipped with the tools they need but those are relatively few in comparison with [the total number of] applicants and statistical figures. Some cooperatives were even subjected to severe criticism, including accusations against bank officials.

Incrimination abounds and young people are making many accusations some of which may be figments of their imagination, or the result of flawed information. It is certain, however, that there is no smoke without fire.

It is also certain that the treatment of youth problems must go beyond mere pacification to find effective, fundamental solutions. At this point, the way remains long and complex.

Where Do We Start?

Developments in our country since 5 Oct 88 have shown that marginalizing youths will assuredly lead to grave consequences, not only economic but also political. Young people have become exposed to dangerous social blights such as drugs, deviations, and dealing in contraband. The climate is conducive to exploitation by certain political movements. It is clearly apparent that hiding one's head in the sand will have grave consequences. That is why a program, described as urgent, was conceived to absorb the largest possible number of youths. A fund was established for the purpose, then a ministry and a showcase program for young contractors. It has become obvious three years later that the action taken was not sufficient for such large numbers of youths. The program was centralized at its onset then expanded through the creation of youth development agencies in the governorates, branches in the governorates, then directorates, then representative offices in the Da'iras and in the communes [municipalities]. The one thing that the strata of this pyramid have in common is that many promises go unfulfilled and that legal and structural gaps are plentiful—banks that evade payments and youths who resort to deception in order to acquire allocations meant for

other purposes, thereby undermining the goals of the program. Others were given tools and work supplies but sold them at less than half of their real value. Cases have become so increasingly complicated that many youths are being overlooked. The issue has grown more complex, having been overseen by four ministers in a three-year period, but the situation is not yet impossible. More practical and objective solutions are still feasible.

Some may think of youth employment programs as mere pacifiers, or as solutions that are more political than practical. A closer look at the program reveals that it did not take certain regional characteristics into account.

Paragraph 3/2 of circular no. 2 of 6 Feb 91, which complements circular no. 492 of 29 Oct 90 dealing with activities, excludes funding for land reclamation and for the husbandry of large herds.

Such exclusions may be acceptable in coastal governorates but not in a governorate like al-Jalfah, long-known for cattle breeding and for large reclaimable tracts. An exclusion such as that absolutely makes no sense.

The program emphasizes vocational as well service cooperatives on the one hand but, on the other hand, does not take distinctive regional characteristics into consideration. The cooperative concept is fine for large cities such as Algiers, Wahran, and Qasantinah, but what success could a cooperative have in a small village like Hami Fidul in the Sidi-Li'jal commune in al-Jalfah governorate? A cooperative such as that would be doomed to failure because it could not have a return sufficient for one person, not to mention two or three.

Those two points possibly account for the flawed distribution of vocational cooperatives. What can a young man, or a group of young men, do with a bakery in a small village like al-Qadid, a bakery costing around 2 million centimes? Villagers are not in the habit of buying bread, but nobody thinks about that. Such a bakery is doomed to fail from its inception, and to be sold at a bargain price, which is exactly what happened.

As to the Youth Card issue—this has become a farce. When we arrived at the Directorate of Information and Youth Activity in al-Jalfah, a young man happened to be there protesting the card which was mocked by everyone to whom he presented it.

Mr. Zahwani Mohammed Likhudur, director of youth development at al-Jalfah governorate, presented us with a small pamphlet so I asked him what benefits would accrue to him if he were beneficiary of the same privileges listed in the pamphlet—tourism, the theater, entertainment, athletic fields, newspapers, etc.

He responded: I agree with you, but the card is only one element of many. I wonder if youths in 'Ayn al-Ibil have need for the theater, tourism, and playing fields. This is laughable!

The Youth Employment Agency in the Governorate

We headed first to the Youth Employment Agency in al-Jalfah governorate which has succeeded in creating a lot of youth employment opportunities despite the inconsistencies and gaps that frustrated other governorates. The governorate has created 428 cooperatives that provide some 1,000 jobs in three major sectors—farming, traditional craft and services, and public works and construction. The governorate is also in the process of creating 559 cooperatives more which would absorb some 1,565 youths; not to mention seasonal jobs.

Mr. Bay Boumirzaq, youth employment commissioner in al-Jalfah, says: "Since the cooperatives have been created and funded, the agency has scrutinized and ratified some 799 cases that cover nearly all governorate communes.

"Bank loans have been extended to 406 cooperatives (70 percent) that employ 1,372 youths. The other 393 cooperatives, which employ 1,108 youths, were denied bank loans for assorted reasons.

"The Youth Employment Agency faces as much difficulty as the youths themselves. Examples are:

- certain communes have not yet mastered how to structure cooperatives and operate them
- some communes lack the paper documents needed to establish cooperatives
- Some communes have not responded to our requests for documentation. Applications handed out to youths are frequently not recorded and sometimes not even dated
- Some da'irah clerks have no offices to receive the youths who call
- Certain banks demand certified documents which the youths in certain communes are unable to provide
- Banks command high interest rates for their loans
- It is difficult to create nonvocational cooperatives, such as for construction and industrial firms, because young people would have to travel to notaries to obtain needed administrative documents
- New nationwide measures for social security and for activity development are slowing down procedures and creating a lot of problems for approved cooperatives
- New equipment is not available on the domestic market and banks refuse to finance old equipment
- Certain cooperatives, even though they have already obtained 50 percent of necessary funding, have been put on hold because they cannot provide documents that the banks did not initially require
- Changes and amendments are made to approved investments in midstream
- Youth Employment Agency notaries cannot exercise sufficient oversight because they lack transportation means to get around.

These are some of the problems we face daily as we go about implementing the employment program."

Three Youths in Jail

We learned while visiting al-Jalfah that three youths were being held in jail because of improper handling of the state-provided 30 percent advance, or so it was rumored. Asked to elaborate, Mr. Bay Boumirzaq responded: "The rumors are not exactly correct. One of the men forged the signature of the cooperative's president and withdrew money from the bank."

[AL-SHA'B] Was a young person imprisoned because of the 30 percent?

[Boumirzaq] Yes, one. It is forbidden by law to handle funds in an unauthorized manner or use them to fund activities other than those for which they are allocated.

[AL-SHA'B] Complex regulations put youths in untenable positions and make it difficult to hold unto the money?

[Boumirzaq] A new proposal is in the works for interest-free bank loans available at 100 percent [of needed financing]. Banks would be paid their loan interest directly by the state out of the 30 percent advance. That would preclude such situations.

[AL-SHA'B] Some youths complained to us that banks obstruct their loans for illogical reasons, and sometimes for no reason at all.

[Boumirzaq] There are cases where the banks have been obstructive for no apparent reason.

We were still in Mr. Boumirzaq's office when an agency employee carried in a list rejected by the bank for the lack of adequate documentation. The list, according to the agency, included a number of cooperatives that have already been qualified, which means that the bank rejected the list as a whole without considering each case individually.

New Proposals

As a matter of fact, we observed that youth employment agencies in the governorates exert considerable effort in implementing the program. They submitted several new proposals, and suggested numerous new areas, that could absorb large numbers of youths, such as the cotton project in the south, the transport project, Sonalgas and water company services, and forests in participation with the International Labor and Forestry Bureau and the relevant organizations.

Seasonal Employment

The concept of seasonal employment is the subject of even harsher criticism, so much so that some people consider it a ruse. How can youths be employed for a month or two then be thrown back into unbounded unemployment? We requested that Mr. Boumirzaq respond to that criticism.

[Boumirzaq] The concept has not been proven really successful in practice even though many public agencies, and especially the communes, found it useful. Certain communes employed youths to full contract term. Others gave the allocations out as unemployment grants even though the Agency regularly keeps all apparatus, be they administrative

or communal, advised of the laws that must be enforced and relays their comments to the sponsoring authorities.

Communes must justify hiring by submitting technique cards [?] which are then relayed to sponsoring ministries for programming. We emphasize that replies sometimes take as long as four months during which time the Youth Employment Agency can not assume responsibility for such cases.

[AL-SHA'B] Couldn't the funds expended on seasonal employment have been used to create new permanent jobs?

[Boumirzaq] For nearly three years, young people have been employed in five sectors, such as forests, municipalities, administration, etc., at a cost of 12,631,034.06 dinars.

Youth Development Directorate

We must differentiate at the onset between youth employment agencies which are only concerned with finding jobs for young people, and youth development directorates which are additionally concerned with cultural, athletic, and recreational youth activities in the governorates and which oversee the creation and regulation of cultural societies governorate-wide.

Youth development directorates, which also protect unemployed youths, seek to involve all youths in various activities, through work, culture, or athletics, and to integrate those activities. The [al-Jalfah] Directorate estimates that there are 145,961 youths in the governorate, according to figures for 1992 by the governorate's Directorate of Planning.

Even though the Youth Employment Agency coordinates its work with the Youth Development Directorate, the latter has many activities such as the creation of vocational and cultural societies in youth centers.

Mr. Zahwani Mohammed Likhudur escorted us on a tour of the athletic complex, which we consider to be the best youth accomplishment in al-Jalfah. The huge complex, whose completion is being supervised by the Governorate Company for Rural Engineering, includes a soccer field with a 100,000-seat capacity, a state-of-the-art swimming pool, a multi-sports hall, and other recreational and entertainment annexes. The complex, as we see it, would fulfill youth needs in the region for a long time to come. It is now 70 percent completed.

In the youth center, whose frequenters fill it to the brim, various activities are forced to share the same space, as affirmed by Mr. Abdelmuli 'Ali, the director.

Miss Sa'daoui 'Aicha, who teaches sewing, and Miss Wajdi Layla, who teaches knitting, point out that "space is our problem at present. Two departments share the same room."

The youth center encompasses societies for the environment and for antiquities as well as for music and for scientific and cultural avocations.

Operating Cooperatives

We toured al-Jalfah to visit some cooperatives that saw the light and became a tangible reality. The first cooperative we visited was the three-member Cooperative for Multi-services. Al-Vani Omar, a beneficiary, says: "We leased the store for 7,500 dinars per month. The cooperative specializes in telephone and postal services under a contract with Telecommunications and Postes. The store has been open for 20 days. A telephone has already been installed and we are waiting for the Post Office Department to install the remaining instruments and supply us with postage stamps."

The second cooperative was an office for engineering studies called al-Mustaqbal al-Zahir. Its beneficiaries are two architects—Bilfred Belqacim and al-'Aqun 'Ali.

Says Mr. al-'Aqun: "We opened the office a year ago. We received some 30 million centimes of which the 30 percent ratio accounts for 9 million and the rest is a bank loan. Our problem at present is that we are not getting cooperation from the [word missing]. We have first right to the many projects they have but they award us none. The office currently employs 5 people."

The third cooperative was a candy store and manufacturing facility run by three members of the same family—al-Sab' Nasr-al-Din, Samir, and Fawzi.

Nasr-al-Din says: "We obtained 68 million from the bank and from the Youth Employment Agency and we are confident that we will pay back the loan in the near future."

It is our observation that the store is doing splendidly.

Before leaving al-Jalfah we visited the Governorate Society for Youth Stimulation and Development whose activities range from providing employment opportunities to organizing international tours and exhibits. The Society oversees some 735 cooperatives in al-Jalfah, according to its president al-'Id Mas'ud Yusif.

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